

SUCCESS STORY

Helena Industries, Inc.

Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership

“GaMEP helped us identify the waste in our process and look for solutions to eliminate it, keeping our costs down so that we could help our customers remain competitive in their market.” Scott Braswell, Operations Manager

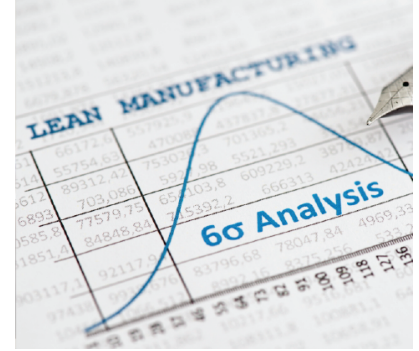
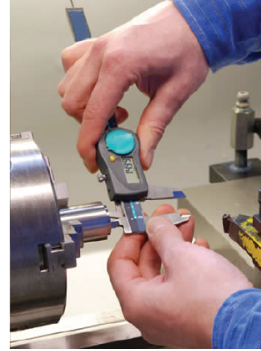
Keeping Customer Costs Down

ABOUT. Helena Industries, a wholly owned subsidiary of Helena Chemical Company, is a contract toll manufacturer for other chemical companies, focused on the agriculture industry. It is based near an inland port in Cordele, Georgia, with rail access to Savannah—a useful location for accessing incoming raw materials and exporting finished goods to countries abroad. With 10 employees, Helena Industries strives to keep costs down, helping customers remain competitive in the agricultural markets and big box stores.

THE CHALLENGE. With increasing expenditures and more competition entering the market space, Helena Industries needed to pinpoint cost-saving opportunities. The company's executive team called on the West Region Manager for the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech, having worked with the NIST MEP affiliate on numerous Lean Manufacturing initiatives in the past.

MEP'S ROLE. The team focused on a product for the lawn and garden industry, and used Value Stream Mapping (VSM) to identify wastes in the process and develop solutions to eliminate that waste. A project manager from GaMEP helped Helena Industries map out the formulation steps and review the packaging process. The team found that they were handling the product too many times, and that formulation was occurring at a faster speed than the packaging and fulfillment processes. Helena Industries was formulating the product much faster than it could be packaged, storing it in super sacks, transporting it to another warehouse for storage, and bringing it back when it was finally time for packaging.

To reduce these unnecessary steps, GaMEP recommended combining the formulation and packaging areas. This decreased immediate production by one third, freeing up space to add equipment to the packaging area. At the same time, the team used automation and quality control mechanisms to increase the production rates on packaging, which greatly increased throughput and allowed the company to keep costs low. Helena Industries used these process improvements to keep its toll manufacturing fees flat so that its customers could maintain competitive rates for end users.



RESULTS



Increased throughput **100%**



Stopped moving **150,000** pounds of material per 8-hour shift



Decreased intermediate inventory by **34%**



Kept customer fees steady

NEXT STEPS



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